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The Lesson of Reform

AN ADDRESS BEFORE THE AMERICAN
HUMANE ASSOCIATION, PITTSBURG,
PA., OCTOBER 12, 1900

BY

ALBERT LEFFINGWELL, M.D.

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ADDRESS.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:

For what will posterity,—looking backward from the vantage of five hundred years hence,—hold in chief remembrance the wonderful Nineteenth Century in whose closing hours we are living to-day? We need hardly be reminded that in material progress, in great and useful discoveries and inventions, this age has contributed more than all the centuries which have preceded it, from the dawn of civilization, down to a hundred years ago. And yet, I venture to doubt whether our material progress will so greatly impress the future historian of our times, as the fact that only during the Nineteenth Century has the ideal of humaneness as a practical principle of morality found expression in human laws.

Nearly fifty years ago, Macaulay, contrasting the England of the past with the England of his own time, declared that there is—

“scarcely a page of the history or lighter literature of the seventeenth century which does not contain some proof that our ancestors were less humane than their posterity. Masters, well born and bred, were in the habit of beating their servants. Pedagogues knew no way of imparting knowledge other than by beating their pupils. Husbands, of decent station, were not ashamed to beat their wives. The implacability of hostile factions was such as we hardly can conceive. Whigs were disposed to murmur because Stafford was suffered to die without seeing his bowels burned before his face. . . . As little mercy was shown by the populace to sufferers of an humbler rank. If an offender was put into the pillory, it was well if he escaped with his life from the shower of brick-bats and paving stones. If he was tied to the cart's tail, the crowd pressed round him, imploring the hangman to give it him well, and make him howl. Gentlemen arranged parties of pleasure to Bridewell on court days, for the purpose of seeing the wretched women who beat hemp there, whipped. A man pressed to death for refusing to plead, a woman burned for coining, excited less sympathy than is now felt for a galled horse or an over-driven ox. . . . The prisons were hells on earth, seminaries of

every crime and disease. At the Assizes, the lean and yellow culprits brought with them from their cells an atmosphere of stench and pestilence which sometimes avenged them signally on bench, bar, and jury. *But on all this misery, society looked with profound indifference.* Nowhere could be found that sensitive and restless compassion which has, in our time, extended a powerful protection to the factory child, to the Hindoo widow, to the negro slave; which pries into the stores and watercasks of every emigrant ship, which winces at every lash laid on the back of a drunken soldier, which will not suffer the thief in the hulks to be ill-fed or over-worked, and which has repeatedly endeavored to save the life even of the murderer."¹

But that which appalls the student of history is not only the ferocious brutality of the seventeenth century, as pictured by Macaulay; it is the seeming utter indifference to suffering which characterized all classes of society down to little more than a hundred years ago. Crime was punished with a savage atrocity out of all proportion to the heinousness of the offence. In no Christian land was human life then so cheap as in England; during twenty-two years (1749-1771), in the city of London alone, no less than 606 persons of both sexes met death on the scaffold in the presence of the rabble, for offences which are not capital to-day; the poor woman who stole a bit of cloth valued at five shillings to buy food for her starving children, was sent to the gallows without compunction, for the benefit of the London shopkeeper, and as an example to others who might be tempted to steal. In 1773, John Howard, a country gentleman of England, journeyed through his native land, visiting its prisons and jails, and discovering in them a state of misery and cruelty surpassing belief. The jailors were generally without pay, except such as they were able to extort from the wretched victims within their power. Stagnant sewers festered beneath cells, and fever claimed scores of victims every year. Prison windows were found blocked up, because at that time, sunlight was taxed to furnish the revenue for England's wars. Some jails were the property of ecclesiastics. When the prison of Ely became insecure from age,

the jailor adopted the expedient of chaining his prisoners on their backs to the floor,—their necks in iron collars,—so that the proprietor of the prison, the Bishop of Ely, might be spared the expense of repairs; and by no persuasion could Howard induce the bishop to make a change. Another dungeon belonging to the Bishop of Durham, had but one little window; and here Howard found six wretched prisoners chained to the floor. “In that situation they had been for many weeks; they were very sickly; the straw on the floor was worn to dust.” In Plymouth, Howard found a dungeon, the door of which had not been opened for five weeks; and in this living tomb, so low that one could not stand erect, without fresh air, and without light, were three human beings. In another “horrid dungeon,” as Howard calls it, entered only by a trap-door, he found a woman, who, with a child at her breast, had been sentenced to confinement in that place a year before. The child had died. It must be remembered that imprisonment, at this period, was the penalty of minor offences only; for hundreds were sent to the gallows, who are to-day sent to the work-house or the jail. Yet the revelations of Howard seem to have excited only a throb of indignation that was soon forgotten; and the abuses he exposed, lasted far into the present century.

The condition of the insane in England at the beginning of this century was equally shocking. Almost anybody, for instance, could get a license to keep “a mad-house,”—as asylums were significantly called. The lunatic was treated as in a hopeless condition, beyond the possibility of recovery, to whom the only duty of Society was effectual restraint. In 1814, a report was issued by the British Parliament, giving results of a government inquiry regarding the “State of Mad-houses in Great Britain.” During the investigation, it was found that ignorant and ferocious keepers had been accustomed to indulge in almost every species of cruelty, insult and neglect. Sometimes exposed in cages like wild beasts, and excited to rage for the amusement of visitors;

more often loaded with chains, and kept in solitude and darkness, their beds but a little straw; half frozen in winter time, and half naked at all times; treated with a brutality beyond expression, and from which there was no possibility of redress,—that was the lot of the lunatic of England almost within the memory of living men. Some cells were on the bare earth; some were supplied with clean straw but once a week. At Bethlehem Hospital of London, women were found naked, chained to the wall by an arm or a leg; and among them one was discovered, perfectly quiet and composed, and bitterly sensible of her surroundings. Were all these chains and fetters necessary? The highest scientific authorities of that day, men of the longest experience in the treatment of insanity, sanctioned their use. Dr. Thomas Monroe, physician-in-chief to Bethlehem Hospital of London for over thirty years, testified before the Parliamentary Committee that “in a hospital for the insane, *there is no possibility of having servants enough to watch a great number of patients without the use of irons.*” No man in England at that time seemed better qualified to express a scientific opinion on the treatment of lunatics. Well, there it is. Of what value is it? Enter to-day, any great asylum of America or Europe, and you will find, in the present treatment of insanity, how utterly worthless may be the judgment of a scientific man,—even with thirty years experience,—when he attempts to justify a cruelty, or seeks to perpetuate and uphold an abuse.

It was in 1828, that a young man, whose name, from that time, during more than half a century, was associated with nearly every great philanthropic movement of the age,—became one of the commissioners in lunacy with authority to inspect the condition of the insane. He visited asylums and retreats in various parts of England and personally observed the abuses that existed. He saw for himself the custom of chaining lunatics to their beds, and leaving them in that situation, from Saturday afternoon until Monday morning, with only bread and water within their reach; he

saw the violent and the peaceable, the clean and the filthy shut up together in dark and disgusting cells; he saw for himself all the horrible customs then pertaining to the care and treatment of the insane. But the fact that astonished him more than anything else,—the mystery of every reform,—was this: *that the great mass of people knew nothing and cared nothing about these cruelties*; and it was only with the greatest difficulty that he could obtain from any outside source the slightest information, or expression of opinion. So horrified was he with the misery and cruelty thus revealed, that he vowed he would never cease pleading the cause of those helpless victims of man's cruelty, until abuses should cease by legal enactment; and the Earl of Shaftesbury kept his vow.

History, it is said, is merely philosophy teaching by example. What lessons of caution and encouragement may we gather by the study of abuses and of great reforms? We, too, are contending for the wider acceptance of humanitarian ideals, and their application to existing evils. Against us are marshalled the same forces of cruelty and indifference; the same selfish interests; the same ignorant reliance upon the statements of men, who, by all means possible, are endeavoring to uphold the systematized abuses by which they live. Their opinions confront us; their authority is cited against us. But what weight will their judgment have on that day when reform is accomplished? What value should be ascribed to their opinions to-day? Let us glance somewhat in detail at the history of one or two of the great humanitarian movements of the past, noting not only the infamy of the abuse, but the greater infamy of its defense; pointing out how the most hideous cruelties have been shielded and upheld, and great wrongs excused and defended,—in the past as they are to-day,—by well-meaning but misguided men; wrongs which despite the support of respectability and the advocacy of selfish interests, fell at last before the outraged conscience of humanity and passed away forever.

It may be doubted whether in human history, there has ever existed a more hideous form of injustice, or a more shameful blot upon civilization than was the African Slave trade of a century and a quarter ago. Beginning (so far as England is concerned), by Sir John Hawkins in 1562, it lasted during two and a half centuries of English history without hindrance or restraint. No pen can picture, and no tongue describe the agony endured in a single slave-ship out of the thousands that, during three centuries, brought Africa to our shores. "So much misery condensed in so little room," said Wilberforce, "the imagination never conceived." The vessels as a rule were from 80 to 200 tons burden, and some of them were even smaller than this. Proceeding from Liverpool or Bristol, from Boston, Providence or Newport, with a cargo of rum, a few trinkets and bundles of cloth, the master of the slave-ship came to anchor off the coast of Guinea, and began to bargain for his cargo of human beings. One by one they were brought to him in canoes, sometimes at night; and no questions as to rightful ownership ever prevented acceptance, or hindered trade. Villages, a hundred miles inland, were attacked at night, without regard to cost of life, in order that the young and vigorous might be captured, and sold to the Christian traders in human flesh and blood. The slaves when brought on board were at once ironed and taken below. Here, on a deck sometimes but four feet high, where it was impossible to stand erect, they were packed so closely, that at night, they could not even turn from side to side; "they had not so much room," said a witness before the Parliamentary Committee, "*as a man has in his coffin.*"² When the ship was filled, then began the two months' voyage known as the Middle Passage. Under a tropical sky, in fetid air so horrible that the odour of a slave-ship could be recognized for miles at sea; in quarters so poorly ventilated, that some slaves died of suffocation nearly every night, and were found when morning came, shackled, the living to the dead; half starved; suffering often terribly from loath-

some disease; tortured without mercy if in agony they resisted or protested in any way; sometimes with bones protruding from the skin, from lying in fetters upon the bare planks;³ dying so fast that often a quarter of their number perished before the shores of America were reached; so enfeebled by their torments that another large number died soon after reaching land; and in many cases, deliberately worked to death after their arrival,—this was the fate of thousands of human beings at the hands of Christian men, under the sanction of Christian society, less than two centuries ago!

What awful tragedies lie buried in the forgotten secrets of that trade! What cruelties were enacted in mid-ocean, by the side of which the atrocities of war and piracy seem almost to fade into insignificance! Sometimes, in their despair, the slaves sought refuge in suicide; and cases were reported where,—having sprung overboard,—they smiled back at their tormentors as though they would cry: “We have escaped you at last!” On one voyage, a young woman, torn from her family, refused to eat or to speak. Every attempt was made by the captain of the slave ship to break her will; thumb-screws, capable of causing exquisite agony, were applied; she was suspended in the rigging and there flogged and tormented, but all to no effect; in three or four days she was dead. After the lacerated body had been thrown to the sharks, some of the slave-women told the surgeon that she had spoken the night before she died. “What did she say?” was his inquiry. “She said that she was going to her friends,” was their answer. Perchance there came to that tortured victim the vision of a promise to be fulfilled.⁴

On another voyage, a child less than a year old, having refused to eat rice mixed with palm oil, a Captain Marshall flogged it himself; ordered its feet put into hot water, with so little care that they were scalded, and the skin came off; and again and again during four days tortured it in the sight of its mother, till at last the child was dead. Calling

its mother forward, Capt. Marshall ordered her to fling overboard the body of her babe. She refused. He cruelly flogged her, until at last, she took up the dead child; went with it to the side of the ship, and, turning her head so that she need not see its body swallowed up by the sea, let it sink beneath the waves, and then "wept for hours."

Now and then a sick child wailed so much at night that it annoyed the captain,—and it was torn from the mother's breast and flung overboard to the sharks. On one occasion some slaves made a little noise at night, disturbing the captain's slumbers; and in punishment, he ordered up eight or ten; tied them up in the rigging and flogged them with a scourge of wire; clapped on the thumb-screws, and left them to writhe in torment while he went back to sleep. "I have seen," said the witness, "the ends of their thumbs mortified, from having been thumb-screwed so violently," and some of them died.⁵

In 1783, a Capt. Collinwood of the slave-ship "Zong" with many sick slaves on board, found himself, after a long journey near the coast of America. If the negroes should die on board the ship, the owners of them would have to bear the loss; if on the other hand, under pressure of circumstances, the captain cast the cargo overboard, then the loss, provided he had sufficient excuse, would by English law, fall upon the underwriters. On the plea that he was short of water, Capt. Collinwood threw alive into the sea 132 of his slaves, and on returning to England, demanded payment for their loss! The insurers naturally refused; but the law was plain, and the courts actually compelled them to pay for the murdered slaves.

These are incidents of that traffic, of which Wilberforce said: "If the wretchedness of any *one* of the many hundred negroes stowed in each ship could be brought before his view, and remain within the sight of the African merchant, —*whose heart could bear it?* Never was there a system so big with wickedness and cruelty."⁶ "Even if the objects of this traffic," said Charles Fox, "were brute animals, no

humane person could expose them to be treated with such wanton cruelty. This nation will not long permit the constant commission of crimes that shock human nature, for the sake of the West Indies." "Why ought the slave-trade to be abolished?" thundered William Pitt; "*Because it is incurable injustice.*" It was, he declared, "the greatest practical evil that ever has afflicted the human race; the severest and most extensive calamity recorded in the history of the world."⁷

How insignificant seem sometimes the beginnings of a great reform! In 1785, the University of Cambridge offered a prize for the best essay on the academic question "whether it be allowable to hold human beings in slavery?" A young man, Thomas Clarkson, decides to compete for the prize; and among the scanty literature of description and protest, he finds a book, written by Anthony Benezet, an obscure Quaker of Pennsylvania, and published in Philadelphia in 1771. Its revelations excite his horror; he studies the question yet more completely; and finally determines to devote his life to that agitation for abolition which lasted over twenty years. Then, to the soul of a woman came the thought that popular agitation is not sufficient; that before any effective work can be done, the question must come up before the British Parliament; a member of the House of Commons, a young man not yet thirty years old, consents to bring up the question in debate; and so William Wilberforce makes the abolition of the Slave-trade and the cause of the oppressed the work of his life. In 1788, a Committee was appointed to take evidence; and so, gradually, the whole infamous traffic was brought to the light of day.

More than one man who had been engaged in the slave-trade testified to enormities of which he had been aware. How familiar to all of us are the hymns of John Newton: "*One there is above all others,*" "*Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,*" "*Safely through another week,*" "*How sweet the name of Jesus sounds,*" and others found in every modern collection. Yet it was the author of these hymns, then a

venerable clergyman nearly seventy years of age, who told the Parliamentary committee of what he had seen forty years before, when he had been captain of a slave-ship, and had landed cargoes of negroes on our shores. "Unlimited power," says Newton, "when the heart by long familiarity with the suffering of slaves is become callous and insensible to the pleadings of humanity, *is terrible*. I have seen them sentenced to unmerciful whippings, until the poor creatures had not power enough to groan. I have seen them agonizing for hours,—I believe for days,—under the torture of the thumb-screws." He stated that often he had heard a captain boast, that after repressing an attempt of his cargo of slaves to escape, "he studied with no small attention how to make the death of the leaders as excruciating as possible." Four times did Newton cross the Atlantic in command of a slave-ship. Of his cargo about one-fourth were children; and in selling them upon their arrival in South Carolina or the West Indies, the idea of keeping children with their parents "was never even thought of; they were separated as sheep and lambs are separated by the butcher."⁸

Against personal testimony of eye-witnesses to its cruelty, how did those who were pecuniarily interested in maintaining the slave-trade manage to prevent all legal interference for nearly twenty years? How may an infamy be defended? We wonder sometimes what words of apology could possibly be uttered in support of so atrocious a system of cruelty. Yet the task is not difficult. It was done precisely as it is done to-day, in the matter of vivisection. The American Humane Association has asked,—not that animal vivisection be abolished, but simply that it shall be placed under such Government supervision as may prevent wanton cruelties and abuse. Our proposals are met by the same methods which were adopted a century ago in regard to the slave-trade,—by a denial of cruelty and by evasion of the truth; by claim of necessity, and by favorable testimony of eminent men in support of the system. Let us note the

character of the evidence which was brought forward in support of the slave-trade.

Mr. John Fountain, called upon to testify before a Parliamentary Committee, June 15th, 1789, stated that he had lived on the African coast for eleven years, and had never even heard of such a thing as kidnapping a slave! On several occasions he had made trips to the West Indies on slave-ships, and he declared that the negroes were treated "exceedingly well indeed." He had mingled with them on the main deck, and found them "perfectly satisfied, and at all times very cheerful,"—just as the late Harold Frederick, describing in the *New York Times* his visit to Horsley's laboratory, declared that he found the animals, "all fat, cheerful, and jolly; the cats apparently unconcerned as to their brain-loss; and the monkeys quite unaffected by the removal of a spinal cord!"⁹ Another witness testified that on slave ships, "the song and dance were promoted,"—neglecting to explain that by "singing," he meant the wailing of the slaves; and that by "dancing," he referred to the custom of bringing the negroes on deck, once or twice a day, and forcing them by the lash, to jump up and down in their chains. Other witnesses declared that "the abolition of the slave-trade would be an act of cruelty to the negro himself." "The total abolition of the trade by all nations," testified Mr. Fountain, "would produce a scene of carnage from one end of the African coast to the other." "The abolition of the slave-trade," said another witness, "would be the ruin of the colonies, destructive to the slaves already in them; and be the most impolitic act, *the greatest inhumanity and breach of faith which this country could ever pass*,"¹⁰ an absurd statement equalled only by that of Dr. William W. Keen, who gravely declared that the Senate bill for the supervision of vivisection in the District of Columbia was "a most cruel and inhuman effort to promote human and animal misery," and a serious menace to "*the cause of humanity!*"¹¹

Of course there was the usual appeal to selfish interests.

If the slave-trade were abolished in England, it would simply be carried on by the Americans with whom of late years it had "particularly increased." Admiral Hotham declared that "the African slave-trade is a nursery for British seamen; without doubt, it is important to keep it up." Commodore Gardner said: "I consider that if the slave-trade is abolished, *there is an end to the colonies!*" Sir John Dalling, formerly governor of Jamaica, declared that if the slave-trade were abolished, "by degrees, it would be the ruin of every proprietor, and produce beggary to his descendants; and by degrees also, I am afraid,—commercially speaking,—bankruptcy in this country." Mr. Jenkinson, a member of Parliament, asserted that "the cause of Humanity is against abolition."¹² Another member of Parliament admitted that it was "an unamiable trade," but he "would not gratify his humanity at the expense of the interests of his country; and we should not too curiously inquire into the unpleasant circumstances by which it was attended." Lord Rodney, Vice Admiral of England, declared that the abolition of the slave-trade "would greatly add to the naval power of France, and diminish that of Great Britain in proportion." Admiral Sir Peter Parker gave it as his opinion that the abolition of the slave-trade "must, in time, destroy nearly half our commerce, and take away from Great Britain all pretention of being the first Maritime Power in the world,"¹³—just as Dr. Kober of Washington told the United States Senate, that a bill bringing the practice of vivisection under the inspection of the United States Government "would be simply one step, and that an important one,—in the direction of dealing a death-blow to the progress of American medicine!"¹⁴ Col. Tarleton, in sneering tones with which we are all familiar, referred in the House of Commons to "that philanthropy which the abolitionists fallaciously esteem to be *their* vantage ground,"—precisely as President Eliot of Harvard University, with equal accuracy and good taste, asserted that the advocates of anti-vivisection laws "consider themselves more humane and merciful than their

opponents.”¹⁵ “By abolition,” continued Col. Tarleton, “several hundred ships, several thousand sailors, *and some millions of industrious mechanics* will lose their employment, and be rendered worse than useless. If I were an enemy to the constitution of England, I would vote for the abolition of the African slave-trade!”

How singular all this seems to us to-day! The slave-trade was abolished eighty years ago. Did “carnage from one end of the African coast to the other” ensue? Did England then fall from her position as a great maritime power, and did France step into her place? Did several “millions” of mechanics find themselves without employment and worse than useless? Was half the commerce of England destroyed? May it not be more than probable that when posterity shall look back upon those who to-day oppose any reform to the abuses of vivisection, they will regard their opposition with the same contempt with which we esteem all this evidence for the slave-trade, given a hundred years ago?

But the strongest argument advanced in favor of slavery or the slave-trade was that which is so familiar to us regarding vivisection,—the denial of any abuse. England desired to know the condition of the slaves in the West Indies. Were they deliberately worked to death under the lash, and their places supplied by new arrivals? That assertion had been made. Never is it difficult to obtain evidence in support of cruelty when selfish interests are concerned; and slavery in the West Indies was defended by some of the most distinguished men of the time, with the same emphasis and eagerness evinced in our day by illustrious personages in defence of the practice of unrestricted vivisection. Witness after witness, summoned before the Parliamentary Committee, testified that the condition of the negro in the West Indies was far superior to that of the laboring poor upon English soil. Gilbert Franklyn of Antigua, West Indies, declared that the lot of the negro slave “is to be envied by the poor of all countries I have seen.” Sir Ashton Warner Byam, the Attorney-

General for Granada, said: "The condition of slaves who are industrious is comfortable and happy, and they appear perfectly contented with their lot. . . . A negro slave in general has fewer wants unsatisfied, and enjoys more of the comforts of life than the English laborer." Mr. John Castles, a surgeon and slave-owner who had resided in the West Indies for over twenty years, declared that compared with the condition of the laboring poor in England, the negro slave was "much more comfortable;" and that he had an occasion to remark this fact in a journey which he had just taken through England and Scotland. Mr. Robert Thomas, who had resided in the West Indies for nine years, comparing the condition of the common laborers and poor people in England with those of the slaves, emphatically declared that "the slaves have a decided superiority with respect to every comfort of life." Dr. Samuel Athill, of the Island of Antigua, said: "I think the situation of the negro and his family is much more free from cares, miseries and mortifications than that of the peasant in many parts of this country."

But even higher testimony was sought; and the commanders of great fleets and navies which had made the West Indies the base of their operations, were summoned to give evidence. "What has your Lordship observed of the behaviour of masters toward their negro slaves in those islands where you have commanded?" was asked of Lord Admiral Shulldham. "It has been mild, gentle and indulgent in all respects; equal to what masters generally show to their servants in this Kingdom." The negroes, Admiral Shulldham said, "in general, appear perfectly satisfied. I can remember when I was a midshipman that I envied their condition, *and often wished to be in the same situation!*"¹⁶ The Honorable Admiral Barrington being asked the same question, declared that the slaves were treated with "always the greatest humanity;" that when rather disconsolate himself,—*"I have seen them so happy that I wished myself a negro!"*¹⁷ Vice-Admiral Arbuthnot had "never observed the smallest cruelty toward slaves." Rear-Admiral Hotham had

known the West Indies ever since boyhood; had noticed that the treatment of slaves was generally "mild and humane; very much so;" and he declared that "slaves were always very well satisfied with their condition, and very cheerful." Sir Ralph Payne, formerly Governor of the Leeward Islands, averred that he never saw a slave, "the severity of whose labour was by any means comparable with that of the day-labourer in England." Admiral Sir Peter Parker declared that "from the best observation I could make, their treatment was mild, lenient and humane; I never heard of even one instance of severity toward a slave; they not only appeared to me to be properly fed, clothed and lodged, but were in my opinion in a more comfortable situation than the lower class of any people in Europe, *Great Britain not excepted.*"¹⁸ And finally Lord Rodney, the Vice-Admiral of England, who had resided in Jamaica over three years, never saw any instance of cruelty, and asserted that slaves "at Jamaica appeared to be much better fed than the common laboring people here."¹⁹

How curious all this testimony seems to us to-day! How shameful, you say, how infamous it was for men standing so high in the esteem of England, to stoop to cast the weight of their national reputation in favor of slavery and the slave-trade! Infamous, does one call it? That is too harsh a term even for so great a blunder. Wherein do these old warriors differ from the men of high position and national repute, who, in our time and country have not hesitated to cast the glamour of their names over the practice of vivisection carried on to any possible extent, without legal restriction or restraint? In imagination, we see these bronzed and scarred heroes of England's navy, giving their evidence regarding cruelties which they had "never seen," and which therefore they were certain did not exist; Admirals Shuldhham and Barrington ridiculously declaring that the lot of the negro slave in the West Indies was so full of exuberant felicity and content as to excite their envy; Hotham affirming the slaves to be "always very well satisfied with their

condition;" Arbuthnot stating that he never observed "the smallest cruelty,"—why are these opinions a whit more shameful or absurd than posterity will regard those of the chemists, geologists and astronomers of the National Academy of Sciences who declared without a dissenting voice (and with no better opportunities for judgment), that "the suffering incident to biological investigations *is trifling in amount!*"²⁰ Does it seem almost like a play, the strange folly of it all? There, in fancy, we see the two chief commanders of England's navy, Admiral Sir Peter Parker, and Lord Rodney, Vice-Admiral of England, each bending under the weight of many years spent in his country's defense; each hastening to put himself on record for all time to come, as a defender of the greatest infamy the world had ever known,—the "incurable injustice" of slavery and the slave-trade! Well, side by side with this picture of Sir Peter Parker, impartial history may one day paint that of President Eliot of Harvard University, writing a committee of the American Senate to the effect that a scientific vivisector must needs be the supreme and only judge of his own actions, since "the Government *cannot* provide any board of officials competent to testify to (his) fitness;" protesting against "all such legislation;" allowing that vivisection should not be permitted "before College classes for purpose of demonstration only,"—evidently ignorant that it is *so* used in the University over which he presides.²¹ There stands my Lord Rodney; and by his lordship's honored name, posterity may place that of the Right Reverend William Lawrence, Bishop of Massachusetts, hastening from Cambridge to Washington to help impede passage of a bill,—not for the abolition of vivisection,—but simply for the restriction of its abuses; vouching for the humanity of his vivisectioning friends as my Lord Rodney vouched for the humanity of the slave-masters of Jamaica; and making charges, for the support of which,—when their accuracy was challenged,—he had not a particle of proof!²² The dust of the old Admirals moulders beneath their marble tombs

under the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral; men remember what they did for England, and forgive them their mistakes. Perchance a century hence, when humane ideas are realized in law and custom as they are not to-day, History in its review of our generation, will find occasion for the same strange contrast of noble character with dishonoring advocacy; the same opportunity for forgiveness; the same pity and regret.

I do not propose to tell the story of that long struggle; it was an agitation that in the British Parliament lasted nearly twenty years. Hopeless, indeed, it must have seemed that moral ideas, based upon unselfish principles, could ever prevail against the opposition of cruelty and greed. Year after year, in the British Parliament, Wilberforce brought forward his resolution for the abolition of the Slave-trade, only to have it meet repeated defeat. Sneers at his philanthropy became the fashionable jest; the Duke of Clarence in the House of Lords denounced him by name as a fanatic and hypocrite; even George the Third, in some moment of lucidity, whispered one day in his ear: "How go your black clients, Mr. Wilberforce?" Judging from the strength of the forces in opposition, the public indifference, the long delays, the scorn and contempt so freely outpoured, even friends of the movement could not but fear at times that he would never succeed. From his death-bed, John Wesley wrote to Wilberforce, in probably the last letter which ever came from his pen: "Unless Divine Power has raised you up to be an *Athanasius contra mundum*, I do not see how you can go through with your glorious enterprise, in opposing that execrable villainy which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils; but if God be for you, who can be against you?" Triumph at last came to the cause for which he had so faithfully labored. In 1807, Parliament abolished the slave-trade, and made it illegal after the following year. In 1811, it was made a felony;

in 1820, it was made piracy, and punishable with death. Where now in the world's esteem are they who testified that to the maintenance of the power of England, it was necessary to keep up that sum of all villainies,—that curse of mankind? Where in the world's esteem a century hence, will be the opinions of those, who in our day are not ashamed to assert that for the maintenance of Medical Science and the benefit of mankind, it is necessary to permit vivisection to be absolutely without limitation or control?

Let us glance now at the history of another of the great humanitarian movements of this century; the agitation which led to the reform of factories and coal-mines in Great Britain. The horrors pertaining to them at the beginning of the century we can but faintly conceive; indeed, in some respects they probably surpassed in enormity even the abominations of slavery. Child-labor had become profitable; and the horrible custom grew up in England, of sending pauper children from agricultural districts, to be literally worked to death in the factories of the North. Packed in wagons like calves or sheep, they went unconsciously to their doom. I wish there were time to dwell somewhat upon the conditions, which even then,—and for many years afterwards,—prevailed in English factories where boys and girls were employed. One of the worst abuses revealed by Parliamentary inquiry, was the brutality of overseers exhibited toward the little children, who, from utter weariness and lack of sleep, were physically unable to perform their tasks. Living thus in a state of constant apprehension and acute suffering; beginning work at five o'clock in the morning and ending after seven at night; steeped in ignorance and want; dwarfed alike in soul and body; without the slightest redress from cruelty, without hope of escape from their slavery; dying long before their time,—human sacrifices to avarice,—this was the condition of the child-slaves of England less than sixty years ago. Then it was that, writing to Lord Ashley, the poet laureate Robert Southey declared: "I do not believe that

anything more inhuman has ever disgraced human nature in any age. Was I not right in saying that Moloch is a more merciful fiend than Mammon? Death in the arms of the Carthaginian idol was mercy to the slow waste of life in the factories!" Then from the heart of another English poet came that indignant cry of sympathy and anguish:

"Do you hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
Ere the sorrow comes with years?
They are weeping in the playtime of the others,
In the country of the free.

They know the grief of man without his wisdom;
They sink in man's despair, without his calm;
Are slaves, without the liberty in Christendom;
Are martyrs by the pang without the palm.

They look up with pale and sunken faces,
And their look is dread to see;
"How long," they say, "how long, O cruel nation,
Will you stand,—to move the world,—on a child's heart;
Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation,
And tread onward to your throne amid the mart?
Our blood splashes upward, O gold-heaper,
And your purple shows your path;
But the child's sob in the darkness curses deeper
Than the strong man in his wrath." ²³

"Ah," you say, "who had the heart to withstand this bitter cry of the children? Who could object to making their working time in the factories but ten hours a day?" Well, among those who made reform impossible for twenty years were some of the noblest and best men in England; men such as Richard Cobden and John Bright and John Arthur Roebuck, to whom in no small degree, the English people owe the abolition of the Corn laws, the vote by ballot and Parliamentary Reform. Cobden and Bright stood for peace when nearly all England was clamoring for war; they were the firm friends of freedom in those dark days of our civil war, when official England was almost

ready to recognize the southern confederacy; yet neither Cobden nor Bright could be made to see that anything in the factory system demanded parliamentary interference. They were not alone in their blindness; Gladstone, whose long after-life was in so many ways devoted to humanity, opposed the ten-hour bill for women and children; O'Connell, who knew well the wrongs of Ireland, could see none needing redress in the factories of Lancashire; the venerable Lord Brougham, zealous as he had been for popular education, for Catholic Emancipation, for suppression of the Slave trade, the abolition of slavery, and other reforms,—nevertheless spoke strongly in the House of Lords as late as 1847, against the bill for factory reform. Sometimes we marvel how great and good men of our own time can be so blind to the cruelties of unregulated vivisection as to oppose the slightest measure of State supervision. But nothing that Harvard's president has ever said against the legal regulation of scientific experimentation upon living animals can begin to equal, in either bitterness or emphasis, the speeches made by Cobden and Bright against factory reform. They lived to see the principle of State supervision regarding labor carried to an extent that even its friends had not dreamed possible; so that dangerous machinery had to be fenced; so that children and young people were forbidden to clean it while in motion; so that their hours of labor were not merely limited, but fixed by law; so that their continuous employment was forbidden to exceed a certain number of hours;—they lived to see all this, and to see England greater, and happier and more prosperous than ever before.

There came a time, after reform was accomplished, that one man had the rare courage to confess his mistake. In 1860, Mr. Roebuck arose in the House of Commons and acknowledged that he had been wrong in his opposition to factory reform, but declared that it had been based on the statements of the millowners of Lancashire. "They declared," said Mr. Roebuck, "that it was the last half-hour

of work performed by their operatives, which made all their profits; and that if we took away that last half-hour, we should ruin the manufacturers of England. I listened to that statement,—and trembled for the manufacturers of England! Parliament passed the bill. From that time down, the factories of England have been under State control, and I appeal to this House whether the manufacturers of England have suffered by this legislation?"²⁴ When the physiological laboratories of America shall have been for ten years under State control, perhaps we may have a like confession, from some who now are "trembling" for the science of medicine!

In a letter to the Earl of Shaftesbury,—whose efforts for reform he had so long and so violently opposed,—Mr. Roebuck referred to the influences by which he had been so grievously misled:

"The present state of these poor women and children is a serious lesson to all legislators. It teaches us in a way not to be mistaken, that we ought never to trust to the justice and humanity of masses of men whose interests are furthered by injustice and cruelty. The slaveowners in America, the manufacturer in England, though they may be individually good men, will nevertheless, as slaveowners and masters, *be guilty of atrocities at which Humanity shudders; and will, before the world, with unblushing faces, defend cruelties from which they would recoil with horror, if their moral judgments were not perverted by their self-interest.*"

There is the secret of the opposition to reform! Whether on the deck of the slave-ship, or in the dungeons of the madhouse and the jail, in the factories of Lancashire or in the private laboratory of the physiologist,—cruelty is ever the offspring of unlimited and irresponsible power, and ever able to summon to her defence those who "would recoil with horror, if their moral judgments were not perverted by their self-interest."

Another phase of the same great humanitarian movement, was that relating to the coal-mines of England. The conditions pertaining to them previous to the present century,

we can never know. Now and then we find the record of some awful explosion, some terrible loss of life; but only the great accidents were reported; and every day, human beings, young and old, were drowned, suffocated or crushed, and no record made. It was not until 1833, that some of the real facts concerning coal-mining began to be generally known, although full comprehension of the truth did not come for several years. What was the condition of affairs here discovered when the light of inquiry was fairly thrown on?

It was a state of things that one would almost hesitate to believe could exist in a Christian country. In the first place, the coal-mines of Great Britain,—like laboratories for the vivisection of animals,—were entirely free from official inspection of any kind; and within them, anything was possible. Working from twelve to fourteen hours a day; confined in narrow spaces, breathing air mixed with gas and dust, and in heat so great that sometimes the candles would melt; liable at any moment to be crushed or wounded, or imprisoned to die of slow starvation,—these,—the ordinary circumstances of the miners' daily lives,—caused them to become especially subject to disease, deformity and premature death. It was found that children were taken into the mines at a very early age, that the workhouses of London sent down batches of orphans to be "broken in"; and if the unhappy child survived his treatment till he was nine, he was apprenticed to the miner and forced to serve him until he was twenty-one. Sometimes a small child's task was sitting in pitchy darkness, twelve to fourteen hours a day, and at intervals, opening and shutting a gate; sometimes the little apprentices were forced by their masters to enter places so dangerous, that the miners themselves did not dare to go, till they had tested the extent of the risk, by first sending their little slaves. Some of the passages were less than two feet high; and along these, tiny children were forced to push or drag little wagons laden with coal. With backs bruised and cut by knocking against the roofs

of the narrow passages; with feet and legs often covered with ulcers; so hungry, that they were often glad to pick up and devour the tallow candle-ends which the miners had thrown aside; exposed to every kind of fatal accident, and never seeing the sunshine except on Sunday,—this was the fate of child-slaves in England, within the memory of living men!

There were yet even darker shadows. In many parts of England and Scotland it had become the custom to have girls and young women work in the coal-mines, performing every description of labor, from hewing out the coal to dragging it in tubs, and in some places, carrying it on their backs up the rickety ladders to the surface of the ground. Girls, naked to the waist, harnessed with leathern girdles about their hips, hitched to iron chains, and crawling on hands and feet in the darkness of the pit; subjected to every peril; associating with the worst and most degraded men; constantly witnessing blackguardism and debauchery; listening to blasphemy and obscenity; working under these surroundings from long before daylight until long after dark; ruined in body, ruined in mind, and in time bringing bastard children upon the parish;—*this* was the picture—revealed to Christian England in the nineteenth century,—of the white slavery on British soil!

It was not until 1842, that Lord Ashley,—afterward the Earl of Shaftesbury,—succeeded in bringing the first bill for reform into the British Parliament. He proposed, in the first place, to prohibit the employment of boys before the age of thirteen; to abolish the apprentice system of pauper orphans, and to take women and girls from the coal-pit altogether. Perhaps you will imagine that after revelations which I have ventured only faintly to outline, such a measure would meet with general approval on the part of every rational person? On the contrary, these suggestions of change aroused the most bitter opposition. From whom do you ask? Why, chiefly from the proprietors of the coal-mines,—acting precisely as the proprietors and directors of

laboratories for vivisection in this country act in regard to all measures for legal regulation. Owners of collieries in every part of Great Britain poured petitions into Parliament, beseeching the rejection of the bill,—just as Congress has been besieged with similar requests from almost every vivisection laboratory in the United States. Their arguments were precisely those with which we are familiar. In the first place, they asserted that no abuses existed; or, if there were any, they had been vastly exaggerated; just as certain Harvard Professors once referred to printed evidence concerning the abuses of vivisection, as “long lists of atrocities that never existed,”—denying in one sweeping sentence facts as certain as any recorded in history.²⁵ It was said that if women and children were taken out of the mines, they would only be driven into the workhouse, or become a public charge. One member of Parliament declared that some seams of coal “could only be worked by women,”—beyond which absurdity could hardly go further. Another member of Parliament insisted that the occupation of a coal-miner was generally considered “a remarkably pleasant and cheerful employment!” The motives of Lord Shaftesbury and those who urged reform were ascribed to “hypocritical humanity,”—precisely as a leading vivisector in the Agricultural Department at Washington, writing to a public journal of that city, referred in terms of customary courtesy to “the so-called Humane Society,” which, he said, “*prates so loudly* about Altruism, morality and ethical principles generally.”²⁶ Altogether, in the opinion of the owners of coal-mines, any legislation affecting them was as unwise and uncalled-for, as the State supervision of vivisection is regarded by President Eliot and by every vivisector in this country.

But no section of the proposed law aroused such fierce antipathy as the clause providing for the legal and systematic visitation of coal-mines by inspectors appointed by the Government; just as no section of the Bill before the United States Senate for the regulation of vivisection,

excites such angry protests as that which opens the doors of the Government laboratories to an inspector appointed by the President of the United States. All such supervision of coal-mines was declared by the owners to be "a useless and mischievous prying into private affairs," precisely as various distinguished vivisectors and their friends have declared that the proposed governmental supervision of vivisection would be "*unnecessary and offensive in the highest degree.*"²⁷ Speaking in the House of Commons, Lord Radnor insisted upon the principle that "it was not the duty of the State to enforce moral obligations." Lord Brougham, one of the most eminent men in the House of Lords, distinguished alike for his learning, eloquence and philanthropy, declared that this legislation was "mistaken humanity";—precisely as those eminent vivisectors, Bowditch and Porter, Stiles and Sternberg and others, refer to the legal regulation of vivisection as "one of the least wise of the agitations which beset modern society." Lord Londonderry went so far in his opposition as to declare that he would say to an inspector, "You may go down into the pit as best you can; and when you are down, you may remain there!" Even Lord Ashley, the promoter of the bill, was inclined to question whether subterranean inspection of coal-mines would be quite safe. Yet, when,—with some modifications,—the bill became a law, not one of the terrible results, so fearfully prophesied, ever came to pass. The coal-mining industry was not ruined. Women and girls, taken from the coal-pits, found other and more decent avocations. Children, no longer forced to be slaves in the darkness of the pit, did not flock to the workhouse, or become beggars on the street. The Government Inspectors went down into the mines and found no one so reckless as to lift a finger against them, or hinder them in the discharge of their duties. The law was obeyed.

It is a significant fact that all subsequent legislation on this subject resulted from evidence made known through that inspection of mines by government officials, which had been

so long and so strenuously opposed. For instance, over a thousand lives of coal-miners had been sacrificed in coal-pits every year. "You cannot prevent such accidents as these," cried the owners of the mines; "they are but the mysterious visitations of an inscrutable and All-Wise Providence." "You can lessen them by suitable legislation; for they are largely the result of your carelessness and indifference," was the rejoinder. And when the awakened humanitarian sentiment of England came to realize that only wise legislation was needed to make human life safer in the mines, it was not very long before such laws found their place on the statute book. What was the outcome? Every law that was passed, tending to make inspection more efficient, and the mine-owners more careful of human life, had the almost immediate effect of decreasing the number of fatal accidents. During ten years (1851-1860), for every million tons of coal raised to the surface, the loss of human lives in the coal-mines of England averaged 14 per year. During the next ten years (1861-1870), the annual sacrifice of human life fell to 11; from 1871 to 1880, it came down to 9; and from 1881 to 1889,—although the mines were continually getting deeper and, in that respect, more dangerous,—the mortality had fallen to only 6 deaths per year, to each million tons of coal raised to the surface. You see it is only necessary to get at the facts through evidence that cannot be disputed,—and the reform of abuse is simply a question of time. This is why government inspection,—whether of factories, coal-pits or laboratories for vivisection—is always so stubbornly resisted: it opens the door for reform. It is a significant fact that from the first bill of 1842 down to the last, of all measures introduced into Parliament providing, by the more thorough inspection of coal-pits, for the greater protection of human life, there was not one,—not one,—which did not encounter the strenuous antipathy of the men who had an interest in the coal-mines, and in concealment of their defects. History repeats itself, and we have no reason for wonder at the opposition that confronts us on this point.

It is because I think that such records of the past are profoundly encouraging to us, that I have brought them again to mind. What can they teach us? Well, in the first place, it seems to me that History inculcates no clearer lesson than the duty of disregard for the eminence of names, when they are put forward in defence of systematized cruelty, or for the hindrance of reform. Men point to some ripe scholar, adorning the presidency of a great institution of learning; to some ecclesiastic, representing the highest dignity of his church, or to some official at the head of a Government laboratory; and because such men are against us, we are told to cease all agitation for reform. And then History lifts a curtain, and we see Daniel Webster standing in the Senate Chamber on March 7, 1850, advocating the passage of the Fugitive Slave law; we see the venerable Lord Brougham in the British House of Lords, using his vast influence to keep women and children in the coal-mines; we see Cobden and Bright and Gladstone palliating and defending the awful atrocities of the factory system; we see some of the wisest and best men in the American pulpit of fifty years ago, defending the infamy of American slavery. For never was there a great cruelty or abuse that could not enlist the championship of respectability, or bring to its support the influence of illustrious names.

And the next lesson which History teaches us is patience. In that promulgation of humane ideals to which this Association is devoted, progress seems sometimes very slow. We call attention to that cruelty of fashion which demands for feminine adornment the sacrifice of song-birds almost by the million,—and the vast majority of fashion-worshippers pay no heed. We denounce the brutalities incident to cattle-transport, and no great outburst of popular indignation demands their suppression. Year after year, we ask, not that vivisection be abolished, but only that it be placed under the supervision of the State, so that abuses which have repeatedly evoked the condemna-

tion of the most eminent men of science in Europe and America, may be somewhat lessened. It seems as little to ask as the demand, made over fifty years ago, that coal-mines should be made safer, or that hours for child-labor in factories should be reduced; yet the same selfish interests, helped and supported by the complaisance and ignorance of well-meaning men, rise in opposition, and the years of agitation seem almost fruitless of result. But, was it not always so? Never in the world's history was there speedily accomplished the reform of an organized injustice which depended for support upon the selfish interests of mankind. From the day when Anthony Benezet began his agitation against the "incurable injustice" of the slave-trade, till the accursed traffic was made piracy by English laws,—almost half a century rolled by. From the time when John Howard first penetrated the gloomy dungeons of his native land, till its prison system was reformed, more than sixty years passed, and Howard was in his grave. The keepers of private mad-houses in England as fiercely resisted inspection and legal supervision as those who are opposing it to-day; but the light at last penetrated the private dungeon, as one day it will penetrate the private laboratory. Against the inhumanity and greed of the owners of coal-mines, it took long and weary years of agitation to accomplish any appreciable reform. For twenty years, the factory-owners of England were enabled to prevent reduction of the hours of toil for women and children; but the great forces of humanitarian sentiment prevailed at last. Courage and patience,—these are the words for us. Nature takes her time; she will not be hurried; and we too, working faithfully, can wait with confidence for the sunrise of that higher civilization, which is yet to dawn upon a suffering world. Are we in a minority? So once were Wilberforce and Clarkson, Shaftesbury and Howard. There is no slavery more degrading to character than the ignoble fear of standing for truth and justice without the multitude's clamouring approbation and support.

“He’s a slave who dare not be
In the right with two or three ;
He’s a slave who dare not choose
Hatred, slander and abuse,
Rather than in silence shrink
From the truth he needs must think.”

In a struggle with the forces of ignorance, cruelty and self-interest, let us not be wanting in that fidelity to truth which was the consolation of Spinoza in his solitude, and which helped Galileo to stand alone; in that hatred of injustice which animates our work; in that devotion to Humanity and humane ideals, which has ever been the inspiration of all conflict with oppression and cruelty; which has ever carried to eventual victory all great reforms.

NOTES.

¹ History of England, Chap. III.

² Evidence of Surgeon Falconbridge before Parliamentary Committee, 1790.

³ Surgeon Falconbridge testified that even the sick had nothing but bare planks to lie upon.

⁴ Evidence of George Millar.

⁵ Testimony of Henry Ellison.

⁶ Speech in House of Commons, May 13, 1789.

⁷ Speech in House of Commons, April 2, 1792.

⁸ In addition to his testimony before the Parliamentary Committee, Rev. Mr. Newton, in 1788, published a little book: "*Thoughts upon the African Slave-Trade*," in which he gave a relation of his experiences. He says: "I hope it will always be a subject of humiliating reflection to me that I was once an active instrument in a business at which my heart now shudders." For a transcript of personal experience, read his hymns beginning: "In evil, long I took delight," and "Amazing grace."

⁹ London correspondence of *New York Times*, October 30, 1892.

¹⁰ Testimony of Alex. Campbell, Esq.

¹¹ See editorial in *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Dec. 23, 1899.

¹² Speech, House of Commons, April 2, 1792.

¹³ Testimony, March 29, 1790.

¹⁴ Hearing on Vivisection, Feb. 1900, p. 111.

¹⁵ Hearing on Vivisection, Feb. 1900, p. 219.

¹⁶ Evidence given March 23, 1790, p. 404.

¹⁷ Evidence of March 23, 1790, p. 405.

¹⁸ Evidence of March 29, 1790, p. 479.

¹⁹ Evidence of March 29, 1790, p. 468.

²⁰ Senate Report No. 1049 (Fifty-fourth Congress), p. 128.

²¹ Hearing before Senate Committee on the District of Columbia, Feb. 21, 1900, on Bill for the further Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, page 219.

²² Same, p. 34. For correspondence here referred to, see "*Journal of Zoöphily*," Sept. 1900.

²³ I have given only a few detached sentences from Mrs. Browning's pathetic poem.

²⁴ *London Times*, March 22, 1860.

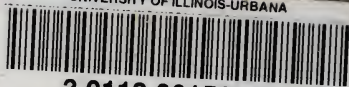
²⁵ Statement in *Boston Transcript*, July 13, 1895.

²⁶ Letter of Daniel E. Salmon, D.V.M., in the *Washington Post* of Feb. 4, 1896.

²⁷ Report on Vivisection, No. 1049 (54th Congress), p. 185.

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